



Fact Sheet

The Merida Initiative - *An Overview*

In December 2008, Mexico and the United States signed the first Letter of Agreement (LOA) for the Merida Initiative, opening a chapter of historic cooperation and acknowledging the shared responsibilities of the United States and Mexico to counter drug-fueled violence threatening citizens on both sides of the border. Through six years of implementation, the Merida Initiative has led to a new architecture for bilateral security cooperation, provided tangible support to Mexico's security and judicial institutions and helped to galvanize U.S. efforts to stop the flow of weapons, money and the demand for drugs. Initially signed by presidents Calderon and Bush, the Merida Initiative continues under Presidents Peña Nieto and Obama.

With \$2.3 billion in appropriated funds from the U.S. Congress, the Merida Initiative has delivered over \$1.4 billion in equipment and training to date. The Strategic Framework for implementing the myriad of Merida Initiative activities and programs is referred to as the Four Pillars, each of which pulls together Merida Initiative programs under strategic objectives. Taken together, these four objectives will strengthen both of our societies in the fight against organized crime and violence and will help drive the transformation of our bilateral security relationship.



PILLAR ONE – Disrupt Capacity of Organized Crime to Operate

Diminish the power of Mexican organized criminal groups by systematically capturing and incarcerating their leaders and by reducing drug trade revenues by interdicting drugs, stopping money laundering, and diminishing production. Through equipment, technology, and training, the Merida Initiative will support better investigations, more captures and arrests, successful prosecutions, and shipment interdiction.

PILLAR TWO – Institutionalize Capacity to Sustain Rule of Law

Enhance the capacity of Mexican public security, border and judicial institutions to sustain the rule of law. Merida Initiative programs will strengthen the capabilities of key institutions to improve internal controls, further professionalize the military and police, reform corrections institutions, and assist in the transition to the New Criminal Justice System.

PILLAR THREE – Create a 21st Century Border Structure

Facilitate legitimate commerce and movement of people while curtailing the illicit flow of drugs, people, arms, and cash. The Merida Initiative will provide the foundation for better infrastructure and technology to strengthen and modernize border security at northern and southern land crossings, ports, and airports. Professionalization programs will transfer new skills to the agencies managing the border and additional non-intrusive technologies will assist in the detection of criminal activities.

PILLAR FOUR – Build Strong and Resilient Communities

Strengthen communities by creating a culture of lawfulness and undercutting the lure and power of drug trafficking organizations. By implementing job creation programs, engaging youth in their communities, expanding social safety nets, and building community confidence in public institutions, Merida Initiative assistance will test new initiatives to strengthen Mexican communities against organized crime.

PILLAR ONE – Disrupt Capacity of Organized Crime to Operate

- Four CASA 235 maritime surveillance aircraft, valued at \$50 million each, were delivered to the Mexican Navy (SEMAR) and one Dornier 328 surveillance aircraft, valued at \$21 million, was delivered to the Federal Police.
- A secure, cross-border telecommunications system between ten U.S. and Mexican border sister cities, valued at \$13 million dollars, has been established. This system provides public security forces on both sides of the border the capability to request and exchange information regarding active criminal investigations. Additionally, through a \$17 million dollar Merida Initiative project, secondary inspection points for persons who warrant additional scrutiny have been established in ten international ports of entry.
- Nine UH-60M Blackhawk helicopters were delivered—three to SEMAR and six to the Federal Police. These aircraft have proven invaluable in confronting criminal organizations who would otherwise have used the advantage of difficult terrain to operate with impunity.

PILLAR TWO – Institutionalize Capacity to Sustain Rule of Law

- The Merida Initiative Corrections Program provides assistance to prisons throughout Mexico working to achieve international accreditation. Since 2011, 20 Mexican correctional facilities have received accreditation.
- The Merida Initiative has provided \$24 million of training and equipment support to the national vetting, internal affairs and kardex programs, a major effort by the Government of Mexico to stamp out corruption and build trustworthy institutions.
- The Merida Initiative has committed over \$247 million in support of Mexico's transition to the New Criminal Justice System. The wide range of projects includes state-level attorneys general exchanges; forensic lab assessments, training, certification, accreditation, and equipment; and law school seminars for professors and students. The support also includes courtroom IT equipment packages essential for oral trials and training for prosecutors, investigators, and other justice sector personnel.
- The Merida Initiative is providing assistance to professionalize Mexican federal, state, and municipal law enforcement agencies and to increase the capacity of their specialized investigative units. This assistance covers a range of training, including instructor development for federal and state police academy instructors, leadership and supervision, basic police skills, and specialized investigative skills. Over \$5 million has been invested in infrastructure improvements and equipment donations to academies in five states, with more donations planned for both state and federal academies.

PILLAR THREE – Create a 21st Century Border Structure

- Delivery of over 300 canines trained in the detection of narcotics, weapons, ammunitions, and currency to the Federal Police, the Attorney General's Office, and Mexico's Customs Agency. Each of these agencies is in the process of building or remodeling their own K9 team training facilities. Additionally, trainers are being certified to train officers in Mexico.
- The acquisition and use of non-intrusive inspection equipment (NIIE) continue to be a critical component to securing the borders of Mexico in the fight to detect and prevent the flow of illicit goods. Through the Merida Initiative, the Border Security program has contributed \$112 million in technology including NIIE, improvement of infrastructure, and personnel training in the areas of border security.

PILLAR FOUR – Build Strong and Resilient Communities

- Merida Initiative Drug Demand Reduction (DDR) programs seek to increase Mexico's capacity to reduce illegal drug consumption. Since 2009, DDR programming has provided technical assistance for the creation and expansion of drug treatment courts (DTCs) in Mexico and contributed \$2.5 million to the Organization of American States to implement new courts in additional Mexican states. Currently, five states in Mexico have DTCs, including the State of Mexico, Chihuahua, Nuevo León, Morelos, and Durango.
- Merida Initiative Culture of Lawfulness (COL) programs aim to instill a sense of individual responsibility to uphold the rule of law in Mexico, with the larger goal of reducing crime and corruption. COL education is now part of the junior high school curricula in all Mexican states. During the academic 2013-2014 academic year, 856,348 students received COL training as part of their education.
- COL programs supported the placement of citizens' watch booths in 73 local offices of the Mexico City district attorney, a program now also operating in Puebla and the State of Mexico. Citizens monitoring the booths provide information to people reporting crimes, advise them of their rights, and invite them to file criminal complaints, which has led to greater accountability and increased customer service in district attorneys' offices.